

Of Finish Ways

HELSINKI more than you wanted to know

Helsinki is a city easy to not like. The harbour water is dirty, the city even on a sunny day, is drab. It is a city half Russian and half Nordic. The people have high cheekbones like their Magyar ancestors, there are few immigrants. I have seen one black and one couple from India only during my two visits here. They were probably tourists.

I think if Nokia went out of business then Finland would fold economically. What else is there. Tourists..well.. to see what. Nothing to see. A few good Russian restaurants, the stone church built underground called Temppeliaukion and that is about it. There is a fortress at the entranceway to the harbour. About 200 buildings on 6 islands called Suomenlinna Fortress..

SAUNA

Sauna Finnish style is complete with the smoke. A regular sauna is still a social occasion. Preferably with a Finnish beer, no trunks or swim suit and the people interestingly enough talk to each other in the sauna. I saw sauna on the program and tried to avoid it. No way/ it was expected I attend. I had to hurry out to store to buy trunks at the duty free store as after the sauna with beer you sit at bar with beer in your swimming trunks.

We walked through Helsinki for about 3 to 4 hours in the afternoon on a glorious spring day. Drab Russian orthodox architecture was evident even in office buildings. People sitting in the main square all had a beer bottle or vodka bottle. A national pastime is drinking in Finland.

BALTIC

Crossing on the Silna line boat was interesting. If you look at the Baltic SEA it is islands all across the way to Finland from Sweden. You can almost walk across without getting feet wet. NO tides at all and I do not know why in the Baltic. The whole SEA is more fresh water than pure sea water not just the entrance way to Stockholm. The archipelago at the harbour entrance is only part of island chain. The water was dead calm but I was not expecting big ice fields and crunching as we went through fields. Particularly after seeing Titanic 3 times. NO lifeboat drill, no life jackets I could see anywhere in cabin. And the boat crews are better at dealing with drunks than abandoning ship.

Had a smorgasbord last night. I was taught to eat a smorgasbord properly. Never mix meat with fish and to eat properly you must eat only a type of fish or meat at a time. Herring on one plate / at least three kinds on same plate/ then go back for 4 types of salmon. Food must never touch on plate also.

ENTERING HARBOUR STOCKHOLM

Sun on water at sunrise and islands and calm and swans

Got up early to come into Helsinki and Stockholm harbour. Entering Stockholm is magical. Mile after mile, kilometer after kilometer of

islands with sun coming up . I practically have ship to myself. The big damn boat comes within touching distance of some of the islands. Or seems that way. Still very impressive. Seeing the distinctive well kept Swedish summer houses .All or most are red painted wood with white painted trim and a dock and an expensive boat. Not just 100s of houses but thousands. Lots of money here in Sweden. Islands are 90 percent rock with a few fir trees. Takes about 40 minutes of nothing but islands to enter Stockholm harbour.